

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000313

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT PASS TO EAP/BCLTV; EAP/RSP; DRL; PRM; H; PM; T

STATE PASS TO USTR FOR E. BRYAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [OTRA](#) [OVIP](#) [ETRD](#) [VM](#) [WTO](#) [RELFREE](#) [HUMANR](#) [HIV](#) [AIDS](#) [APEC](#) [CVR](#)

SUBJECT: NSC Senior Director Michael Green's Meeting with FM Nguyen Dy Nien: WTO, Religious Freedom and Prime Minister's Visit

Ref: A. Hanoi 284 B. Hanoi 254

11. (SBU) Summary: Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Dzy Nien told visiting Senior Director for Asia Michael J. Green that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is optimistic about the bilateral relationship and, though very unhappy about Vietnam's designation as a Country of Particular Concern for Religious Freedom, "will do our best to prove we should be off the list." Vietnam is "ready to send, and welcome," religious delegations to engage in dialogue on religious freedom, the FM said. Vietnam is hoping for a conclusion to bilateral negotiations with the United States on WTO "very soon" and wants USG help in receiving Permanent Normal Trading Relations (PNTR) status, Nien said. End Summary.

12. (SBU) NSC Senior Director for Asia Michael J. Green met with Foreign Minister Nguyen Dzy Nien February 4. The Ambassador and Poloff accompanied. FM Nien opened the meeting with the promise that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would "fully cooperate" with plans for the visit to the United States of Prime Minister Phan Van Khai in 2005. "We look forward to further strengthening of the relationship," FM Nien said. Dr. Green said there is "great optimism" in the USG towards the bilateral relationship and noted that Vietnam was the only Southeast Asian stop he was making on this trip to Asia. The USG believes that the bilateral relationship is strategic and important and at a critical stage, Dr. Green continued. The United States and Vietnam have common strategic interests and strong and deepening economic, cultural and political ties, he said, although these ties have been made more complicated this year by the "tough issue" of religious freedom. The religious freedom "work plan" (ref A) Dr. Green discussed earlier in the day with Assistant Foreign Minister Nguyen Duc Hung (septel) offered a win-win solution to the problem of Vietnam's continued status as a Country of Particular Concern for religious freedom, Dr. Green said. The GVN's decision to release prisoners of concern to the United States (ref B) was a "good move," Dr. Green stated, and the United States wants to follow that up by working with the GVN on systemic change. With agreement on a work plan, the USG hoped to work out a long-term solution and allow the Prime Minister and President Bush to have a productive discussion.

13. (SBU) The Foreign Minister said he, too, is optimistic about the relationship. The GVN will "do its best" to observe religious freedom and allow the people of Vietnam to enjoy it, he added. Religious freedom is enshrined in the Constitution, and all Vietnamese people should have the freedom to worship whatever religion they choose, as well as the freedom not to worship. The designation of Vietnam as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) made people "very unhappy" because it was unfair, FM Nien said. "We need your support to lift CPC," he said. "We will do our best to prove we should be off the list, but we need your support." The "work plan" will pave the way for Vietnam's removal from the list and a positive exchange of high-level visits, Dr. Green replied, adding that both sides need to exchange diplomatic notes or other written instruments to consolidate and clarify the issue.

14. (SBU) Another way to improve communication between the United States and Vietnam is the opening of a "second track" dialogue on human rights and religious freedom issues, Dr. Green said. The track could include think tanks, universities, religious groups and other institutions and allow for broader U.S.-Vietnam engagement. The Ambassador observed that religious organizations in the United States are a very positive force in dealing with HIV/AIDS, an area of close U.S.-Vietnam cooperation; a second track is another opportunity for useful exchange on their efforts to help address social problems. The Foreign Minister said this is an "excellent idea" and said the GVN is "ready to welcome and send religious delegations."

15. (SBU) From the Vietnamese perspective, the tough issue is WTO accession. The GVN hopes to "conclude negotiations with

the United States very soon" to pave the way for Vietnam's accession, FM Nien said. Dr. Green replied that the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) is "working hard and determined to wrap up negotiations as soon as possible." One of the obstacles is legislation the Vietnamese National Assembly needed to pass. Perhaps, Dr. Green suggested, it would be easier to push through "umbrella legislation" that would supercede existing trade laws. This solution had worked in China, he noted. Whether or not negotiations have concluded by a Prime Minister visit in June or July, the two sides should be able to claim they are moving in that direction. FM Nien noted that Vietnam also would need to be granted Permanent Normal Trading Relations (PNTR) status. Dr. Green responded that this will require a Congressional vote and that because many members of Congress are very interested in Vietnam, it will be necessary to convince many of them individually that PNTR for Vietnam is the right move. The Ambassador noted that further releases of political prisoners, progress on the "work plan" and action on commercial issues of interest to U.S. companies are all good preparations for the PNTR vote. The Foreign Minister said he hopes all will go well, because "our friendship will do a lot to consolidate peace and prosperity in the region."

16. (SBU) Foreign relations is not a zero-sum game, Dr. Green said, and the U.S.-Vietnam relationship does not have to come at the expense of Vietnam-China relations or any other relationship. The United States is "on a good track" with China, he said, and Vietnam has its own relationship with other states. The benefit of this is that it motivates China to develop good relations of its own with Vietnam and other neighbors. One direct manifestation of this is regional architecture systems in East Asia, Dr. Green said; good dialogue among countries leads to regional architecture institutions being open and inclusive. The United States and Vietnam have common interests in this area particularly, and should "conspire together" to guide the development of new regional architecture institutions. From the U.S. perspective, APEC is still the preeminent regional organization in Asia and the Pacific, Dr. Green said. The United States plays a leading role in APEC, and wants to cooperate with Vietnam to prepare for both the upcoming APEC summit in Korea and the 2006 summit in Vietnam, which President Bush will probably attend. The United States is focused on two main APEC themes, Dr. Green explained: trade liberalization and facilitation and the regional integration of bilateral free trade agreements; and, taking collective steps to prevent terrorism and proliferation from becoming consequences of increased and liberalized trade in the region. FM Nien said he looks forward to working with the United States on APEC and other issues, and sent his regards to National Security Advisor Hadley.

17. (U) Dr. Green cleared this message.

MARINE